

■ Letters to the Editor

Honor Women as Soldiers and Women

In light of recent increases in sexual harassment incidents within the military, I felt compelled to write this letter. I wanted to reach our most senior NCOs (you who wield so much influence and maturity on our young soldiers) on this issue.

Our women soldiers have proudly served our nation through many wars, proving themselves to be as tough, professional and able as any man.

We haven't (yet) learned to fully appreciate and respect them for that ability. Eleven thousand women came home from the Vietnam war to none of the care, compassion and concern which they gave when that was so very needed. Recently, these valiant ladies excelled in arduous service during Operation Desert Storm.

The heartless stupidity of the "Tailhook" scandal was a callous affront to our servicewomen. The military must learn to be more sensitive and genteel towards these women. They need to know we value, appreciate and (still) honor them as persons and soldiers.

We must all work ardently to ensure there are no more "Tailhook" outrages in any branch of the military. Our military women rightly deserve our full respect and support.

SSG Joe Hammel
Waegwan, Korea

"My LT and Me" Article Stirs Memories

A fellow NCO sent me a copy of the Winter 92 *NCO Journal*. It took me back many moons to the "Brown Shoe Army."

The story, "My LT and Me," by CSM Woodyard tells it all. I was one of those young sergeants with those young LTs who now are retired generals. I've been retired 16 years as well.

Thanks for such a great magazine. I sent my copy to a young West Pointer

(Class of 92). His father and I were in 'Nam in 68.

I'd also like to thank MSG Ashley C. Davis for his review of my book [*The Last Medal of Honor*]. Our future leaders (NCOs and Officers) must possess faith, determination and a positive attitude. I believe a positive attitude will carry you farther than ability. Again, thanks for a great magazine.

MSG (Ret) Roy Benavidez
El Campo, Texas

Muscle Not Everything To Being a Soldier

After reading the Fall 92 issue of *The NCO Journal* I was surprised to read SGT William E. Burke's "quick fix" to Women in Combat. Did you run short on "Letters to the Editor?"

I'm sure that SGT Burke isn't a day over 21 and he probably has no more than three or four years of service!

SGT Burke's opinion of a person's usefulness and maximum potential in life past age 30 is absurd. I'm sure he'd like to see people over 30 in nursing facilities or retirement centers!

Is SGT Burke's memory so short? Doesn't he remember how efficient and productive people like General Schwarzkopf were during Desert Storm. I'm sure he was well over 30. I don't think SGT Burke gave much thought to age versus efficiency, motivation and self respect. I think he's been far too busy trying to figure out a way to justify his bad attitude about females.

I have several years of active duty service and I'm well into my 30s and a woman. I'd like SGT Burke to know that it's my experience that older soldiers, whether men or women, have much more stamina, initiative, motivation and self control than the "younger soldiers." Every time I participate in an NCO school the older soldiers are the ones who score the highest, volunteer and participate to the max and by

all means carry more than their weight. I recently completed BNCOC at Ft. Ben Harrison, Indiana, where PT was a must, five days a week. Every time we ran, it was the younger soldier who continually fell out.

If you give me a choice of who I'd prefer in combat, I'm not going to be concerned about gender but I'd definitely feel more secure with a soldier with age and wisdom rather than a "younger soldier." There's a lot more to being a soldier than just muscle.

SGT Paula S. Elliott
Nebraska National Guard

Managing Promotions

Recently I was talking with a friend of mine and the topic of promotions came up. My associate was talking about the SFC board and wondering why he wasn't selected this year. I myself was anxious to see if he had some insights into the board because I'd soon be eligible. This brought our attention to the Officer Corps and how they manage their promotions.

It seems to me the Officer Corps does a much better job of managing their soldiers than the NCO Corps. What's the reason for this?

Mentoring. Not once have I been told how to get promoted to the senior ranks. Do we just do the same things we've done in the past or is there something new we should concentrate on?

As senior NCOs we need to know—not just guess—what will help us to get promoted. Do we need more TO&E assignments, or is a mix of assignments better? As a rule how much college should we have to make sergeant first class and master sergeant?

It's also time our specific branches were better able, or more willing, to give us the facts about upcoming assignment opportunities. In other words, the branch managers need to give us more than, "This is open and this is open." Provide us with pros and cons for each specific assignment and together we can

decide which assignment is best for us. Whenever possible the soldier should be involved in the decision-making process.

The drawdown makes it essential for senior NCOs to know how to manage their careers. A mentoring system can help solve this problem.

SSG Paul R. Danner
Fort Sill, Oklahoma

NCOs Look For Officers Who Make Decisions

This letter is in reference to the article "Walking and Talking the Talk." (Winter 92) I'd like to commend CSM Robinson on her comment on what NCOs expect from our officers. CSM Robinson hit it right on the head when she stated "we look for an officer who... is not afraid to make decisions, is there to provide the leadership and guidance and cares about soldiers."

Such officers are a rare breed as we face this mandated Congressional drawdown. It seems to me, and I might be wrong, that most midgrade officers, ie: captains and majors, are a little gun shy in making command decisions. And, this is so because they don't want to make a mistake which might end their careers through what they may see as a less than average OER.

As we walk into the 21st Century, let us not forget where we came from and make decisions to lead and take care of soldiers. I think that to walk the walk and talk the talk as an NCO or officer we must first forget about day to day politics of our ratings and start concentrating on leading and training the young soldiers who will take our places in the near future.

Ask not what this Army can do for your career, but what you can do for your Army. Also, we must remember where we came from and where we're going as leaders.

MSG James E. Russum, Jr.
Fort Riley, Kansas

Reply to "Ranger Rick"

This is in response to "Ranger Rick" Tscherne's letter in your Winter 92 issue. I'm amazed that SFC Tscherne would think the Army is the loser because he chose to retire. I have to wonder if the reason he was passed over for promotion is because the promotion board saw the same qualities in this NCO's records as the rest of the Army now sees in his letter.

SFC Tscherne obviously believes he is justified in giving up and developing a negative attitude because he didn't receive what he believed to be proper recognition. However, he not only quit on himself but also quit on his soldiers.

If he and his soldiers deployed to war, would he still believe he was justified if his soldiers were killed or injured because of his actions or inactions—because "he really didn't care anymore?"

An NCO doesn't stop doing his duty because he's upset over not being promoted. There are many good NCOs in the Army who can't get promoted for various reasons, but they continue to do their job in a professional manner. It's my opinion that the Army's loss of SFC Tscherne is in fact the Army's gain. We don't need NCOs with self serving attitudes. There are too many truly good NCOs that are willing to do the job for no other reason than it's what they want to do. SFC Tscherne, what took you so long to get out?

MSG Samuel McGregor
Fort Bliss, Texas

AGR Oblivion

This letter is to further reiterate the "ills" of the Army promotion system and it's "stepchild" the Army Reserve. SFC Tscherne's letter barely draws blood on the subjects surrounding "promotion snafu's", specifically reverse discrimination and preferential treatment!

I was drafted and served as a combat medic with the First Infantry Division,

earning a combat medical badge and a Bronze Star. I reentered the service in the Army Reserve and volunteered for recruiting duty. I presented the image that both the Recruiting Command and the Army Reserve were eager to "use."

Later, I transferred to the Active Guard Reserve program. Three assignments in Pennsylvania and New York now total 17 years of active duty in a reserve position.

As a former recruiter, I brought counseling expertise to the technician program and saved many disillusioned "TPU" reservists from throughout six or more years of service. After 13 years (time in grade), I've become aware of the ethnic and gender partialities which demonstrate annual evidence of inside favoritism.

It's obvious that ARPERCEN management techniques are permeated with incompetence. One AGR assigned in "the field" received notice that NCO-ERs dating back three and four years are "mysteriously missing" for an upcoming board. Additionally, that won't effect the qualitative portion of the board.

SSG Michael A. Collins
West Chester, Pennsylvania

Living the Promotion Lie

I read with interest and can identify with SFC Tscherne's letter on promotions in the Winter Journal. I call my experience "Living the Big Promotion Lie."

The "Lie" starts as soon as you're promoted to sergeant and they tell you promotion to senior NCO ranks requires certain things. These things are: college, successfully complete a 'hard assignment,' have varied assignments, leadership time, high SQT score and be physically fit.

The promotion selections during the past few years reinforced my feelings. Why? I was selected for promotion to sergeant first class in the secondary zone with 10 years of service and while on

recruiting duty. I immediately began working the magic "must do" list. I was very successful in my 'hard assignment' as a recruiter.

After returning to my primary skill I attended night school two to four nights a week and earned my Associates Degree. I consistently scored in the upper 80 percent on my SQT and attended all required NCO courses. I served in leadership positions which are documented on my NCOERs. I knew I was ready for promotion to master sergeant.

I didn't get promoted in the secondary zone in 1991 or in the primary zone in 1992. I was disappointed but not overly so until I read the results of the promotion board. That's when the "lie" became evident.

The selectee list in my MOS showed NCOs with no college. It also included NCOs with SQT scores in the 60 percentile range. After having worked a promotion selection board and knowing how selections are made I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I was more qualified than over half of the list! Why? Maybe the "good old boy network" is alive and well at Fort Benjamin Harrison.

I have one more chance before retirement eligibility. With nine years in grade you can be assured what I'll do if not selected. SFC Tscherne, good luck with your retirement, I may be joining you very soon.

SFC Paul Johnson
Kaiserslautern, Germany

Kudos From Missouri

I just wanted to let you know that a quick survey here at DOES (Directorate of Evaluation and Standards) revealed that you are doing an outstanding job. Most of the articles in *The NCO Journal* are useful. Keep up the quality of (our) pub!

SSG Thomas J. Chavez
Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri

MILES Training... Training As We Will Die?

Last summer the National Guard developed a training plan that lowered the unit-level of training to squad and platoon, where it should have been all along. Large-scale exercises that train the few at the expense of the many are gone.

MILES lanes this past summer concentrated everyone's attention on an idea that's been around for awhile, but has received scant application in the past. Someone deserves enormous credit for this initiative to redirect our training resources in the right direction and at a level that makes complete sense.

But there's a snag. If some units are conducting the MILES lanes like some units in Nebraska, and I fear many are due to the Active Component influence and imposition, then we're seriously threatened with changing a very profound principle from "training as we will fight," to "training as we will die."

Our methodology for the MILES lanes needs rethinking, reevaluation and reconstruction. Our future combat soldiers must be trained to expect the unexpected. The present method is too predictable.

Not adhering to the rules of engagement on occasion pales in comparison to the sterile environment of the lanes that offer little in the way of "initiative" training for the good guys as well as the bad.

Not only do the good guys know specifically the one or two tasks required of them before they reach the objective, they also have the luxury of conducting a dry run over the terrain. This method allows for the absorption of a great deal of intelligence that real combat soldiers are often deprived of.

The OPFOR, on the other hand, is too restricted. They can't practice every standard for their ARTEP counter-tasks. They must remain in the same positions for both the dry and wet runs.

What is the tragic consequence of such training? Soldiers become condi-

tioned to expect real situations to offer the same step-by-step methodology. The good guys will meet their end when the bad guys weren't where they were suppose to be, or weren't playing by the rules.

The great thing about MILES lanes, is the tremendous amount of initiative demonstrated by the soldiers. Having a primary objective is fine, but don't be so restrictive that both sides can't choose to develop their own plans and then react to a variety of situations as they develop.

SSG Marshall K. Maddox
ARNG, Falls City Nebraska

Reader-Friendly ARs?

I am a faithful reader of your (our) magazine and would like to see an article on the promotion system, to include the establishment of the promotion zones. Also, what causes a soldier to have a retroactive promotion?

I know that it's the personnel service company's job to know, but it seems they say read the ARs. Some of the ARs are confusing to us non-personnel types. I think such an article would help soldiers to prepare their career maps and set goals.

SGT Ivory M. Davis
Tripler AMC, Hawaii

■ *Editor's Note: If the majority of our readers think there is a need for an article discussing the promotion system (centralized and semi-centralized) cut off score determination, retroactive promotions, etc., we will be happy to oblige. Let us know what you want or need to read in your NCO Journal.*